

Greta scolds UN: 'This is all wrong'; Politicians' 'empty words' have hurt future, says teenage climate activist

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Body

Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg had one question for the global leaders assembled at the United Nations: "How dare you?"

Days after telling U.S. lawmakers "listen to the scientists," she made the same demand on an international scale. Thunberg chastised leaders for praising young activists like herself while failing to deliver on drastic actions needed to avert the worst effects of climate change, and she warned that if the world continued with business as usual, her generation would face a major catastrophe.

"This is all wrong," said Thunberg, who was visibly emotional as she spoke on a panel at a UN climate summit Monday. With tears in her eyes and her face flushed, the 16-year-old activist - who began skipping school in her native Sweden a year ago to protest inaction on climate change - chastised the world leaders who had gathered in New York.

"I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean," said Thunberg, who travelled for two weeks on a solar-powered sailboat to reach the U.S. "Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you?"

Thunberg has quickly become the face of a global movement of young people demanding that their elders safeguard their planet's future. On Friday, millions of young people all over the world joined Thunberg in a climate strike that she led from New York.

Thunberg continued her campaign Monday, as she and 15 other young people filed a legal complaint with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child arguing that major countries - Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey - have known about the risks of climate change for decades but have failed to take sufficient action to curb their emissions. The petitioners range in age from eight to 17 and hail from Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, India, the Marshall Islands, Nigeria, Palau, South Africa, Sweden, Tunisia and the United States.

The youths contend their rights are being violated not just because of severe weather, but also because of lack of food and water and an increase in refugees. The UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child allows youth or adults to directly appeal to the United Nations if they feel a country is violating children's rights.

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," Thunberg said.

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